

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9336
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: RESETTLEMENT OF HMONG REFUGEES IN FRENCH
GUIANA

REF: STATE 76220

1. SUMMARY: FRENCH OFFICIAL PROVIDED EMBOFF WITH DETAILED INFORMATION ON EXPERIENCE THUS FAR WITH RESETTLEMENT OF HMONG REFUGEES IN GUIANA. FRENCH ARE GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE PROJECT THUS FAR. DESPITE SOME INITIAL PROBLEMS (OBJECTIONS OF GUIANESE, PARASITIC INSECTS, LONGER-THAN-EXPECTED PERIOD OF INSTALLATION) THEY SAY HMONG ARE HAPPY IN GUIANA AND MANY OTHERS IN THAILAND HAVE ASKED TO GO THERE. FRENCH PROCEEDING CAREFULLY AND ARE CONSIDERING EXPANDING THE PROJECT, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE WARY OF MENTIONING THIS POSSIBILITY TO GUIANESE. INFORMATION WAS PROVIDED ON UNDERSTANDING THAT IT WAS FOR DEPARTMENT'S BACKGROUND ONLY AND THAT IT WOULD BE TREATED WITH UTMOST DISCRETION. FRENCH WOULD HAVE NO REPEAT NO OBJECTION TO LOW-KEY VISIT BY DEPARTMENT OFFICER, BUT NEED TO KNOW WELL IN ADVANCE SO THEY CAN MAKE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

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2. ON RECOMMENDATION OF QUAI D'ORSAY, EMBOFF VISITED MICHEL BARBIER, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COMITE NATIONAL D'ENTRAIDE FRANCO-VIETNAMEIEN, FRANCO-CAMBODGIEN, ET FRANCO-LAOTIEN (CN) TO OBTAIN INFORMATION REQUESTED REFTEL. BARBIER, WHO IS A CAREER PREFET PRESENTLY SERVING AS DIRECTOR OF GOF OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS, IS

THE SENIOR OFFICIAL WITHIN THE SECRETARIAT OF THE CN, A SEMI-OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION SET UP BY GISCARD SOME TIME AGO TO COORDINATE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ASSISTANCE EFFORTS TO INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. IT IS SOMETIMES KNOWN AS THE COMITE SAINTENY, AFTER ITS FIRST CHAIRMAN, NOW DECEASED.

3. BARBIER WAS MOST FORTHCOMING, AND PROVIDED DETAILED INFORMATION AS WELL AS A COPY OF THE REPORT OF HIS DECEMBER VISIT TO HMONG SETTLEMENT IN GUIANA, ON STRICT UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS WAS FOR DEPARTMENT INFO ONLY, AND SHOULD BE TREATED WITH UTMOST DISCRETION. FRENCH ARE PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS THAT INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR PLANS TO EXPAND HMONG SETTLEMENT PROJECT NOT BECOME KNOWN TO GUIANESE, FOR REASONS EXPLAINED BELOW. COPY OF BARBIER'S TRIP REPORT HAS BEEN POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT (HA/ORM).

4. BARBIER SAID IDEA FOR RESETTLEMENT OF HMONG IN GUIANA HAD DEVELOPED FROM FACT THAT MOST HMONG ARE UNSUITED FOR RESETTLEMENT IN URBAN AREAS, WHEREAS GUIANA IS SIMILAR IN CLIMATE AND TERRAIN TO THEIR NATIVE AREAS, AND IS SEVERLY UNDERPOPULATED (ABOUT 50,000 PEOPLE FOR AN AREA ONE-FIFTH THE SIZE OF FRANCE). BARBIER SAID FRENCH WERE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED TO FIND SUITABLE MEANS FOR RESETTLING HMONG, IN VIEW OF LARGE NUMBERS ALREADY IN THAILAND REFUGEE CAMPS, AND FACT THAT THEY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARE BEING SYSTEMATICALLY EXTERMINATED EITHER BY BEING GUNNED DOWN WHEN THEY ATTEMPT TO CROSS INTO THAILAND OR, ACCORDING TO BARBIER, BY USE OF SOVIET CHEMICAL WARFARE AGENTS IN LAOS. FRENCH PROCEEDED CAUTIOUSLY BY SETTING UP EXISTING PILOT PROJECT AS AN EXPERIMENT. AT FIRST GUIANESE OBJECTED, BUT THESE OBJECTIONS HAVE EVIDENTLY SUBSIDED. BARBIER SAID GUIANESE OBJECTIONS BECAME EXAGGERATED DURING THE RECENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AS A LOCAL ISSUE. A GUIANESE COMMITTEE WAS SET UP TO ADVISE AND ASSIST THE HMONG, AND THIS HAS HELPED.

5. FINANCING: HMONG PROJECT HAS BEEN FINANCED THUS FAR BY FUNDS FROM GOF AND CATHOLIC CHURCH. GOF HAS PROVIDED L,800,000 FRENCH FRANCS, AND THE CHURCH AN ADDITIONAL 800,000 FRANCS. FUNDS ARE CONTROLLED BY FRENCH PREFET IN CAYENNE. IT WAS AT FIRST THOUGHT THAT HMONG COULD BE SELF-SUPPORTING WITHIN SIX MONTHS, AND FUNDING WAS SET UP WITH THIS IN MIND, BUT FRENCH NOW ESTIMATE THAT

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IT WILL TAKE A YEAR TO REACH FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE. FUNDS HAVE BEEN USED PRINCIPALLY FOR TRANSPORTATION TO THE SITE, MATERIALS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING (HMONG THEMSELVES BUILT THEIR HOUSING) PURCHASE OF TOOLS, AND RENTAL OF HEAVY EQUIPMENT (BULLDOZERS, ETC.) TO CLEAR FOREST LAND FOR AGRICULTURE. IN ADDITION, FUNDS HAVE BEEN USED TO PAY SALARIES OF TWO FRENCH PRIESTS AT THE SITE AND FOR FOOD FOR HMONG UNTIL THEY CAN CULTIVATE ENOUGH FOR THEIR OWN NEEDS. FRENCH ORIGINALLY ALLOTTED 40 FRANCS PER PERSON (INCLUDING CHILDREN) PER DAY FOR THIS EXPENDITURE, BUT HAVE RAISED THIS FIGURE TO 50 FRANCS PER PERSON PER DAY. SAVINGS ARE RETURNED TO ORIGINAL FUND FOR USE IN FINANCING A SECOND GROUP AT A LATER DATE.

6. SELECTION OF REFUGEES: FRENCH SELECTED RURAL HMONG WHO WERE USED TO FARMING IN HEAVILY FORESTED AREAS. THEY TRIED TO INCLUDE AS MANY FRANCOPHONE HMONG AS POSSIBLE, BUT FOUND VERY FEW. THEY SOUGHT RELATIVELY SMALL FAMILIES (NO MORE THAN FIVE AS A RULE) FOR REASONS OF GENERAL PRUDENCE. FINALLY, THEY CHOSE ONLY YOUNG (AGE 25-35) HEADS OF FAMILY IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION.
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7. SITE AND ACREAGE: SITE FOR PROJECT IS CALLED "CACAO," ABOUT 70 KILOMETERS (ONE AND ONE HALF HOURS BY CAR) FROM CAYENNE, IN A DENSELY FORESTED AREA. LOCATION IS AN ATTRACTIVE CLEARING ABOVE A BEND IN THE RIVER COMPTE, IN THE COMMUNE OF ROURA. FRENCH CALCULATE THAT FOR SUBSISTENCE-LEVEL EXISTENCE, THREE AND ONE HALF HECTARES OF FOREST HAD TO BE CULTIVATED FOR A FAMILY OF FIVE PERSONS. TO REACH A NORMAL LEVEL OF EXISTENCE, INCLUDING MEETING OWN NEEDS AND SELLING SOME PRODUCE, THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE RAISED TO TEN HECTARES PER FAMILY. THUS FAR A SETTLEMENT OF 500 HMONG, ONE THOUSAND HECTARES OF FOREST HAS TO BE CLEARED AND PREPARED FOR CULTIVATION. THREE HUNDRED HECTARES WILL HAVE BEEN CLEARED AND PREPARED FOR CULTIVATION BY END OF 1978; REMAINDER WILL BE CLEARED IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS.

8. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE: HMONG ARE PRESENTLY GROWING ONLY PRODUCE FOR THEIR OWN CONSUMPTION ON TWENTY-FIVE HECTARES CURRENTLY CULTIVATED, PRINCIPALLY VEGETABLES THEY USED IN INDICHINA, SUCH AS RICE, CORN, CHINESE CABBAGE, AND BEANS. EVENTUALLY THEY WILL ALSO GROW CASH CROPS, BUT NO DECISION HAS YET BEEN TAKEN ON WHAT THESE MIGHT BE, BECAUSE OF NEED FOR EXPERIENCE AND NUMEROUS VARIABLES INVOLVED (SUCH AS AVAILABILITY OF MARKET, NATURE OF LAND, ETC.). FRENCH HOPE TO FIT HMONG PRODUCE INTO THEIR OVERALL PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF GUIANA, AND ARE CONSIDERING PRODUCTION OF FRUIT FOR JUICES OR RICE FOR USE IN GUIANA AND FOR EXPORT TO FRENCH ANTILLES.

9. ADMINISTRATION: HMONG PROJECT IS CONTROLLED DIRECTLY BY CN. FUNDS ARE ADMINISTERED BY FRENCH PREFET IN CAYENNE. ON SITE ARE TWO FRENCH PRIESTS, WHOSE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SALARIES ARE PAID OUT OF THE SPECIAL CN FUND FOR THE PROJECT. ONE PRIEST SPEAKS HMONG, THE OTHER IS A TECHNICAL ADVISOR. IN ADDITION, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED BY THE LOCAL GUIANESE COMMITTEE WHICH EQUATES TO CN.

10. PROBLEMS AND PLANS: FIRST PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED WAS OPPOSITION OF GUIANESE, WHO WERE SUSPICIOUS OF FRENCH INTENTIONS. THIS HAS LARGELY BEEN OVERCOME, BUT COULD BE AROUSED AGAIN WHEN FRENCH MAKE KNOWN THEIR PLANS TO ENLARGE THE PROJECT. SECOND PROBLEM WAS PARASITIC INSECTS, BUT THIS IS A TECHNICAL PROBLEM AND FRENCH ARE SURE THEY WILL RESOLVE IT SHORTLY. SETTLEMENT ALSO NEEDS A HMONG-SPEAKING DOCTOR, AND FRENCH ARE TRYING TO RECRUIT ONE. OTHERWISE, FRENCH BELIEVE HMONG ARE "VERY HAPPY" IN GUIANA, WHERE THEIR EXISTENCE, CON-

SISTING OF AGRICULTURE, HUNTING AND FISHING, IS SIMILAR TO EXISTENCE THEY LED IN INDOCHINA. AS OF DECEMBER 1977, AFTER LESS THAN SIX MONTHS OF EXISTENCE, THE SETTLEMENT HAD ALREADY COMPLETED MOST CONSTRUCTION (PRIMARILY HMONG-STYLE HOUSES ON STILTS), AND A RUDIMENTARY SCHOOL WITH FOUR TEACHERS HAD BEEN SET UP. FRENCH CREDIT SUCCESS THUS FAR TO DISCIPLINE AND COMPREHENSION OF THE HMONG, AND THE CAREFUL APPROACH WHICH HAS BEEN FOLLOWED. FRENCH STRESS NEED TO ENSURE THAT HMONG CULTURE IS MAINTAINED AND PROTECTED FOR A VERY LONG PERIOD. THEY BELIEVE MOST HMONG IN THAI CAMPS

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WOULD LIKE TO GO TO GUIANA, AND ARE PLANNING A SECOND SETTLEMENT, BUT ARE MOVING CAUTIOUSLY UNTIL THEY HAVE MORE EXPERIENCE WITH FIRST GROUP. THEY ARE ESPECIALLY WARY OF INFORMATION ON THIS POINT GETTING TO GUIANESE PREMATURELY. FRENCH ALSO THINK SOME LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT HMONG SETTLEMENTS UNDER SIMILAR CONDITIONS PROVIDED INITIAL EXPENSES WOULD BE COVERED AND BELIEVE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR THIS PURPOSE WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE.

11. VISIT OF DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: CN WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO A LOW-KEY VISIT TO CACAO BY A DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL, BUT STIPULATE THAT THEY AND QUAI SHOULD BE

NOTIFIED SUFFICIENTLY IN ADVANCE TO PERMIT THEM TO MAKE
ARRANGEMENTS WITH PREFET IN CAYENNE AND PERSONNEL AT
SITE. NOTIFICATION SHOULD BE MADE IN PARIS, NOT REPEAT
NOT LOCALLY IN GUIANA.

12. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO REACH DOCTOR YANG DAO.
HARTMAN

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Message Attributes

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